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114 expeditions. My repeated return, on the other hand, properly
123 strengthened the Indians in their belief that I esteemed them and their various institutions highly. That is why they proved more accommodating and more trusting from one year to the next and were more willing to let me take part in one thing or another from which they had previously excluded me. The more I tried to rid myself of the European way of thinking and acquired values and to exchange them for those of the Fuegians, the more advance I made in learning their subjective qualities. The hoary connoisseurs of tribal tradition felt this approach very definitely and with great satisfaction, regarded me more and more as one of themselves, and finally let me penetrate into the immeasurable depths of the inner spirit of their tribe. After arduous research and by means of constant observation and thorough discussion, those treasures from the spiritual heritage of the much misunderstood Yamana which fill the following pages were brought to light. They are all the more valuable because they reach back into the early age of mankind from which they have been preserved down to our own day because of the complete isolation of the feared Cape Horn Archipelago at the southern tip of America.

/1033/ A. Religion and Morality

•771 Because of their nomadic way of life the Yamana do not present the compact unity enjoyed, for example, by an agricultural society. It is probably for this reason that they have cultivated a high level of mental flexibility and that they show alertness in all spheres of their human endeavors. Hence it was possible for definite, universally binding forms to develop only to a limited extent, since, on the one hand, the numerically scant population lives scattered in many, small fragmentary groups and, on the other hand, each of these groups, as well as the single individual, strives to preserve for itself the greatest possible freedom and independence.

Even more striking is the scarcity of definite forms expressing their religious conceptions. As such, these are very limited, and people like our Fuegians do not parade them. Quite the contrary, everything supernatural is regarded by them with such seriousness and piety that they do not make it the subject of long, penetrating

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discussions even among themselves. Even less would they expose it in front of Europeans who, from the start, prove unworthy of it. This circumstance alone sufficiently explains why many travelers have learned absolutely nothing about the religious conceptions of our Indians. Moreover, they carry on their religious practices not only irregularly, but quite inconspicuously; hence, an outside student does not clearly understand and correctly evaluate the things that he might see or hear. I myself was obliged to take a roundabout course and to wait a long time for the favorable circumstances provided by chance or luck before entrance into the world of the religious conceptions of our Fuegians was opened to me.

Although their store of religious ideas and all of their moral precepts are very simple and straightforward, their import is surprisingly rich and deep. Their more important details seem humanly natural and impress one favorably. Distorted images and perversions which are found in the religious heritage and rites of many other primitive peoples, as well as among some civilized peoples, are totally lacking among our Yamana.

a. Investigations of the Yamana Religion

The imaginative world of our Fuegians is animated by many spirits which are differently rated and whose relationship to human beings is by no means uniform. Just as the Indian himself keeps them clearly separate, so must they be regarded in a careful description. The religious element in the strict sense of the word occupies an area by itself and it is difficult to define in relation to other conceptual areas. In this book the religious concept or the religion of the Yamana /1034/ includes everything concerned with the appreciation and veneration of their particular deity, a Supreme Being, who has several names and who is definitely contrasted with them as a supra mundane, spiritual personality. Everything that is involved with their knowledge of this Supreme Being must be regarded as a religious activity and worship, whether it be ceremonial services, prayer formulas, or spontaneous words. The sum total constitutes their true religious heritage. Most

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•771 closely associated with it is the entire store of rules and regulations which can be described, in a word, as their universal moral law, which really involves moral responsibility. In this abstract limitation of religion there is no place in the religious sphere for the belief in other spirits, in souls living after death, in ancestors and culture-bearers; hence these beliefs will be discussed in separate sections. This sharp distinction, which is based on the different ideas and conceptions of the Yamana, is primary in giving an outsider clear insight and reliable judgment.

771 114 It must be surprising to learn that until the most recent times travelers and missionaries have categorically denied that our Fuegians have any religious ideas and practices. Some Europeans did not even credit them with the necessary mental capacity. Hence the Yamana were universally regarded as irreligious. Occasionally there were references to a belief in spirits and certain supernatural beings, but, besides being extremely inadequate and inaccurate, they do not even pertain to the realm of the strictly religious. It was not until my journeys that this ideological heritage, which deserves consideration because of its richness and its characteristic value, was uncovered.

No other aspect of the cultural heritage of a people poses so many and such serious difficulties for European investigators as the religious. A definite method for its general evaluation can hardly be devised, but one who strives for any kind of success may not deviate from certain guide lines. Those navigators who had only fleeting contact for brief hours with individual Fuegians were obviously incapable of grasping anything tangible about the natives' religious heritage, for, as has been said, the Yamana certainly do not parade their faith.

It surprises everyone who reviews the situation, and justifiably so, that this field was not opened up even to the missionaries, in spite of decades of association with the Indians (1). Although the

1. Even Tylor, Anfänge der Cultur /Beginnings of Culture/, Vol. I, p. 411, acknowledged: "There is no people without a language and without religion, for even if individual peoples maintain that they have no religious concepts, it is to be suspected that they conceal

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their thoughts, especially since the missionaries are not always able to gain the confidence of savages or to understand their views."

missionaries tried to approach them, they did not take the right /1035/ course (2). It is a well known fact that, since the estab-

2. Despard (b):746 very early speaks of his efforts: "We used our increasing knowledge of the language, to ascertain their ideas on religious subjects, and we discovered that they have no knowledge whatever of God, or of a First Cause in creation, no idol or other object of worship, no custom of prayer or incantation" /cited in English/.

lishment of the Protestant mission, travelers in the Beagle Channel region have not only relied on the opinions of the missionaries living there for their judgment of the Yamana, but have almost imperceptibly adopted this opinion as their own, the foremost example being the members of the Mission Scientifique, whose publications have served others, in turn, as their only source. Individual efforts to grasp the religious ideology of the Yamana were only occasionally made by this or that traveler. If one examines their procedures more closely, he will realize why their efforts remained fruitless. For example, Spegazzini (a):191 declares: "I have asked the oldest people if they know where they came from and who their ancestors were; they looked at me in wonder, and answered that the grandfather had died in a neighboring bay, like their father, and that they had never said anything on the subject. Religious ideas, too, are completely lacking, and the sole belief is one about the spirits of the dead, but it is neither very nighly developed nor very definite" /translated from Spanish/. Even Hyades (f):587 realized that the goal would not be reached by direct questioning (3). Although he personally did

3. He clearly confesses: "I need not say that direct questions addressed to the Fuegian savages are useless for any light on the question

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of a special cult among their people. Similarly, they will never spontaneously make any disclosures on this matter" /translated from French/.

not notice any kind of religious activity, he had the right idea when he warned that on the strength of this alone one should not conclude that they were entirely without religion (4). His well

4. He (b):13[illegible] says: "We have never seen evidence of any kind of cult; we have no clear proof of a belief in a future life. It might be beneficial to remark that these negative signs do not constitute positive proof of the absence of all religious feeling" /translated from French/.

considered words were completely ignored by [illegible]ers, which is precisely why there was a constant repetition of thoughtless statements about the lack of anything religious among the Fuegians. Adding up these voices does not in itself increase their credibility, for they all more or less go back to a single source, namely, the view of the English missionary Thomas Bridges (p. 144 /untranslated/) which has proved to be erroneous.

1. Opinions of Travelers

As may be expected, the navigators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in other words, of the older period, dismissed the religious views of the Yamana with a few superficial words. They were /1036/ unable to communicate with them even by means of elementary signs, let alone by speech. There are no visible portrayals of religious faith, any more than there are conspicuous rites. How, therefore, could these Europeans who had almost no preparatory training for such difficult observations learn anything about the strictly guarded treasure of spiritual possessions!

Weddel made a first attempt, which was seriously meant, but very inappropriate, when he "read them a chapter out of the

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111 114 Bible." He himself was not surprised that the Fuegians "did not seem to understand" him (p. 70 /untranslated/). Captain Fitz-Roy (a): 179 was not able to determine definitely whether they believe in any kind of divine being: "Ideas of a spiritual existence, of beneficent and evil powers, they certainly have; but I never witnessed or heard of any act of a decidedly religious nature, neither could I satisfy myself of their having any idea of the immortality of the soul" /cited in English/. Wisely, he abstained from further opinions. The reports that Darwin sent out into the wide world about their spiritual life were very nearly disastrous for our Indians. We shall repeat here only a few sentences from (f):I;123: "The belief in spiritual forces will easily lead to the belief in the existence of a god or of several gods, for savages will naturally attribute to spirits the same passions, the same lust for revenge or the simplest form of justice, and the same affection which they have experienced within themselves. In this respect the Fuegians seem to be in a middle state...And yet we could never find that the Fuegians believed in what we would call a god or that they carried out any kind of religious practices. Jemmy Button stoutly maintained, with justifiable pride, that there is no devil in his country, and this assertion is all the more strange since, among savages, the belief in evil spirits is more common by far than the belief in good ones..." Briefly and precisely he also assures us: "We have no reason to assume that they practice any kind of religious service" (p. 102 /untranslated/). He and Fitz-Roy refer to the same informants, namely, the three young Fuegians who were brought back to England in 1830 on the "Beagle" (p. 88 /untranslated/). They cannot be regarded as reliable because of the contradictions and inaccuracies contained in their statements (5).

5. For example, Darwin (d):245 relies on Jemmy Button in his assertion "that in winter when they are tormented by hunger they would rather kill and devour their old women than slaughter their dogs" (pp. 102, 235 /both in untranslated portion/). As for Button's companions, Darwin (d):246 also asserts: "The nearest approach to a religious

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feeling that became known to me was shown by York Minster, who, when Mr. Bynoe shot a few very young ducks as specimens, declared in the most solemn manner: 'oh! Mr. Bynoe, much rain, much snow, much blowing.' This was evidently meant as punishment in retaliation for devastation by human beings."

While these three young Fuegians were in London in 1830 they were carefully examined. In the "Phrenological Remarks" given in Fitz-Roy (b):148, "strong feelings for a Supreme Being" /cited in English/ are set forth. These few words are to me no proof for the definite and clear form of belief in a deity which our Yamana actually have. Compare Koppers, in Anthropos, Vol. 22, p. 286; 1927.

Nevertheless, from all sides Darwin's assertions have /1037/ received full credence and the opinions of subsequent decades continued to refer to him, although toward the end of his life he changed his opinion in favor of the Fuegians (p. 106 /untranslated/). On the other hand, Roskoff:49 did not take a stand until rather late when he briefly corrected Darwin as follows: "But this does not deny the Fuegians any trace of religion, even though it cannot be surprising that the Englishman does not find among them his own belief in a God."

[197] A few decades after the second trip of the "Beagle," that is to say, in more recent times, English missionaries began their activity on the Cape Horn Archipelago, and after that the number of European visitors to that region increased. They all, practically without exception, sought help from the missionaries, or at least had temporary contact with them. This is true first of Bove and his companions who crossed Tierra del Fuego in 1882 and 1884 and stayed for a while in Ushuaia with the missionaries there (p. 146 /untranslated/). Relying on their reports, he (g):236 first of all judges: "The Fuegians are not very superstitious and they have only very rudimentary religious beliefs" /translated from Italian/. He also (d):297 and (e):159 asserts: "They have a good and an evil

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•771 114 deity, but the one is neither more nor less esteemed than the other. Curupi, the devil, sometimes avenges himself, however, with storm, snow, and rain. The rainbow is a sign of his anger; the women and children are afraid of its appearance, but the men scold and spit at it" (6). There is some value in repeating a num-

6. In Cojazzi:105, under the heading, "Religione in genere /Religion in General/," one finds this statement just as it stands, and not another word.

ber of false statements; they clearly show how cautious one must be about accepting other reports by this same authority. Accordingly, it is not surprising to find his companion Lovisato (b):149 maintaining in similar tones: "They do not have any notion of God, hence no religion and no amulets of any kind" /translated from Italian/. Spegazzini (a):171 also traveled there at the same time (p. 147 /untranslated/). Of the Yamana he says only: "Religious ideas are completely lacking, and the sole belief is one about the spirits of the dead, but it is neither very highly developed nor very definite" /translated from Spanish/.

The members of the Mission Scientifique who, in their own opinions, were almost completely independent of the English missionaries, touched but lightly on the subject of religion for that very reason. They did not succeed in making successful observations of their own. Hyades (g):38 declares: "The French were unable to discover a trace of religious ideas among the Fuegians; as we know, the missionaries did not fare any better." Nevertheless, a number of indications made him (f):587 cautious in his judgment: /1038/ "All we can say about the religious feeling of the Fuegian savages is that it is limited, externally at least, to a hint of attention and feigned contemplation in the presence of a strange religious ceremony. Let us add that the Reverend T. Bridges positively told me that before his apostolate in Tierra del Fuego the Fuegians had no idea whatever of religion" /translated from French/. In his principal work he (q):253 repeats this view: "We have not verified any sign of religious feeling among the Fuegians..." /translated from French/. He is well aware of the grave import of his words, yet he persists in his

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conviction: "We do not believe that we can modify our opinion about the absence of religious feeling among the Fuegians. We observed them very attentively from this point of view during the year that we spent among them. we were never able to perceive the slightest hint of any kind of cult or religious idea" /translated from French/.

One has the impression that, in view of such definite statements, there could be absolutely no contradiction (7). Even later,

> 7. Martial:212 takes into account the serious difficulties of the investigation being discussed, as a result of which, he says, it would not be easy "to obtain readily a clear idea of their beliefs about the deity and a future life" /translated from French/.

Dabbene (b):202, for example,[8] maintains: "There is no knowledge that a religion exists among the Yahgan, since they practice no rite that reveals any cult whatsoever" /translated from Spanish/. According to Spears:70, "they knew nothing of God, and had no word expressive of such an idea" /cited in English/. Furlong (b): 137 agrees. The Fuegian "has no religion in the general acceptance of the term...No word for God, Creator, or pray has ever appeared in his language, nor from any action, ceremony, or custom can a belief in these things be inferred" /cited in English/. Lothrop (b):171, however, already had access to some of my conclusions which he took into account. Thus, m[illegible]ecent research also comes to the opinion that the Yamana [illegible]thout any kind of religion. Compare the data that Cooper:148 assembled.

2. Opinions of Missionaries

Although the men who put themselves at the service of the Fuegians through their mission work are only now being heard, this does not change the well-proved fact that they were the ones who told ignorant navigators and travelers of their own experiences and observations. They were obliged, for professional reasons, to to speak, to investigate the religious ideas of their wards.

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At the beginning of their activity they occasionally mention -- as did one or another navigator, for example, Parker Snow:1, 337 -- that during a brief religious service the Fuegians who happened to be present were silent and reverent. To me this is no proof of their own religious feeling, for such an attitude is not unusual among them. Despard wrote on October 4, /1039/ 1859 (VP:VII, 51:1860), as follows: "No word has appeared for God, or Creator, or pray. They have a word for Spirit Cashpeak, and they are very uneasy at hearing it, for they say they shall see it if named" /cited in English/. He (b):698 contradicts himself, however, in the sentence: "The Firelander has no religion at all. He knows neither God, nor idol, nor spirit, and has accordingly no word for either of these" /cited in English/. Stirling, on the other hand, nowhere expresses himself definitely about the religious ideas of the Yamana.

The position of the much-quoted Bridges on this question deserves all the more consideration inasmuch as most of the travelers in Tierra del Fuego during the last decades have adopted his opinion. In 1866 he (a):181 first published a general survey of the living conditions, institutions, and customs of the Yamana. He also devoted a few lines to their conceptions of supernatural things and so-called spirits. He disposes of the religious in the true sense with a single sentence and merely says: "They have no knowledge of God, no thoughts of a future state, either of reward or punishment" /cited in English/. Strangely enough, Bridges did not deviate from this first opinion even after decades of association with the Yamana and often repeated it, word for word. For example, he (h):207 says: "They do not acknowledge a creator and neither have any idea of the future nor expect anything after death" /translated from Spanish/. Moreover, he (k):237 says again: "They lacked any idea of a Supreme Being, although they believed in the existence of spirits or souls... They offer no sacrifices nor have any idea of atonement for sin" /translated from Spanish/. Finally the unequivocal opinion (e):332 follows: "As for religion, we can say that they had none." If occasionally an Indian showed signs of religious feeling, Bridges put it down solely to the success of missionary influence (8).

8. Once a lame man said to him "that God struck him. It is pleasant to realize that the

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knowledge of God is taking root in the minds of the people, and that they themselves attribute to Him the acts of his providence". /cited in English/ (MM:X, 10;1876).

His co-workers in particular echoed him in this assumption, especially the younger ones. The last two of them, John Lawrence and John Williams, emphatically assured me, independently of each other, that they had never come across religious expressions among the Indians which were their own. Each of these missionaries took the view of the other without examining it and blithely adhered to this conviction. Aspinall:270 stated it once more: The Yamana "devoid of all religious ideas and duties, know nothing except the vague concept of spirits of the dead which go about in the forests and which they fear."

Thus, like the Europeans who visited the Cape Horn region, all the missionaries labored under the false impression that the Yamana are completely irreligious. Every unprejudiced critic will realize that they did not come closer to the facts because of their negative attitude toward the /1040/ Indians. Elsewhere (p. 322 /untranslated/) it was proved in detail that Bridges especially had no desire whatever for a calm and just evaluation of the store of ideas of the Indians; in fact, faced with his ill-humor, they carefully and purposely concealed what was dear to them and what he would have defamed with his disdainful, disparaging remarks. After I personally had learned many of the prayer formulas with which they address themselves to their deity, I freely expressed my pleasure. More than once on such occasions Nelly Lawrence would add: We never told Thomas Bridges these beautiful things, for he would have been scornful and ridiculed us!" At the end of my fourth journey I again presented to the worthy Reverend John Lawrence a short summary of what I had learned about the religious heritage of the Yamana. This time, too, as on my third visit, he was sincerely pleased, for it meant that shortly before the end of his life he was permitted to see corrected a false opinion of the Yamana, to which the missionaries had also contributed.

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3. My Own Conclusions

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It was anything but encouraging at the start of my journeys to be faced with the strange fact that all the visitors to Tierra del Fuego, as well as all the missionaries without exception, denied with emphatic, unequivocal words that our Indians had any kind of religious view and practice. Everyone regarded the Yamana as irreligious. On my first and second visit, therefore, I consciously avoided touching upon this subject in my conversation with the members of the Lawrence family and in my contact with the Indians. Besides, there were other, more immediate problems which first had to be solved.

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The traveling investigator must be favored by fortune; otherwise his efforts are in vain. I obtained the first indications of the religious ideas of the Yamana quite incidentally and without my doing anything. One evening on my second journey I was again sitting with a group of several men who were explaining to me the ancient traditions of their tribe. It was then that I learned for the first time about their myth of a great flood which, in hoary antiquity, had inundated their present homeland. All of us who had listened with obvious seriousness to the old storyteller were silent for some time and thought about the catastrophe of that flood. Afterward one or two men made some short explanatory remarks. I now bravely ventured to ask: "Whoever sent that big flood?" Everyone present instantly became quiet and a painful silence followed. Embarrassed, they lowered their eyes and avoided my gaze so that they would not be forced to answer me. I repeated my question and in a friendly way asked for the desired explanation. Old Alfredo who had done the talking that evening replied /1041/ emphatically: "Lexuwakipa sent that tremendous flood." When he did not add anything more, I asked: "Is Lexuwakipa really so mighty?" Alfredo replied: "As a matter of fact it was strong Watauinejwa who sent the general flood. Lexuwakipa prevailed upon him to do it; it was her intention to demolish the whole world. With Watauinejwa she succeeded in having the great flood come!" Naturally I asked again: "Who is this Watauinejwa?" This very obviously increased the general embarrassment and everyone present maintained strict silence. I felt as though I had been guilty of an impropriety or had ventured on dangerous ground.

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religious ideas and practices from every stranger since their contact with European culture and why they entrusted me alone with this precious heritage, albeit under very special considerations. I must say that the same is true of my participation on two occasions in their secret youth initiation, Čiéjaxa, as well as my direct experience of the men's ceremony, kina, and the school for medicine men, lóima-yékamuš. In their opinion I proved myself worthy of this extraordinary favor.

b. Content of the Yamana Religion

It is not a serious injustice to the Fuegians if, from the start, one expects no systematic organization of their religious ideas, which do not form a complete, compact, interlocked chain of thought; in fact, wide gaps are sometimes apparent. Individual ideas are juxtaposed loosely and without connection. Although the Fuegian has these ideas, he does not bother to understand them completely, and also he does not seem to feel the need of having them arranged into a coherent whole. A summary and arrangement of what is presented here as the religious heritage of the Yamana would be entirely foreign to him. I have personally undertaken it in order to present a survey and to make possible a scientific evaluation.

On the preceding pages Watauinéiwa, the /1045/ sole deity of the Yamana in the more limited sense of the word "religion" (p. 949), has been designated as a "Supreme Being" (10).* Although

10. For the same reasons I previously likewise referred to the deity worshipped by the Selk'nam as a "Supreme Being" (Vol. I, 496).

the Fuegian does not have this conception, he in fact knows no other spirit superior to Watauinéiwa. The latter is also the only one accorded a unique power and a superior position, whereby he stands far apart from every other being. Finally, his relationships to human beings are those of an absolute master and sole lawgiver; one renders religious homage to him alone. It is only in this sense that Watauinéiwa is called a deity, as is customary in theology generally.

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which the individual human being has with him and, above all, in the prayer formulas.

/1954/ 2. Religious Activity

All accounts clearly indicate that the Supreme Being of our Yamana does not, like the chief personages in their myths, dwell far beyond the clouds, unconcerned with the events on earth. Quite the contrary, Watayinéwa truly and attentively follows the activities of the individual, often directing fate against the person's hopes and desires; indeed he is more active than is agreeable to many. Everyone knows him as an active, [illegible] being. Thus, no one loses sight of him entirely; much less would anyone purposely and heedlessly ignore him altogether. It is true that some Indians are more eagerly concerned about him, more actively engrossed with his characteristics, and therefore think about him more often than do other fellow-tribesmen, but there is not a single Fuegian who is completely "godless." Without any effort on his part, everyone is often enough reminded of Watayinéwa by his relatives and neighbors and is included in their religious activity. For that very reason no one loses the religious customs as practiced and handed down by earlier generations. To what extent and how often each individual practices religion by himself cannot be determined precisely, nor can it be shown that women do more in this respect than men. As elsewhere, personal disposition and the influence of training in youth are decisive, as well as a person's immediate environment from early childhood.

α. General Practices

The amazing simplicity revealed in the Yamana way of life is, naturally, also apparent in the religious realm. Except for specific prayer formulas, their outward religious activity is remarkably limited. They have no actual portrayal of their Supreme Being or particular places reserved for his worship, nor do they have any kind of sacrifice. A priesthood and religious ceremonies are also lacking. The gathering of many families on the

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occasion of a death cannot be regarded as a religious ceremony since this is held primarily because of grief over the loss of a dear relative. The religious heritage of our Indians is never seen by a European visitor, and that alone explains the agreement of all the travelers and missionaries who depicted them as absolutely irreligious (13).

> 13. I often spoke freely with the older men and women about the services and the religious functions to which in earlier days, as children and young people, they were invited with a certain regularity by the missionaries in and outside of the mission stations. Each time I had the impression that it was completely incomprehensible to them how one could please the deity by a public appearance and in an assemblage of many persons. It is much more in keeping with their own frame of mind for an individual to face the Supreme Being by himself and to settle with him alone whatever he has on his mind.

One could probably describe as religious activity in its wider sense the firmly established, equable mental attitude of deep veneration toward /1925/ Watauinéwa that the individual maintains. Not everyone is always conscious of it, but in some way it has a decisive influence on him to move along certain paths and to be led by universally valid principles. In its effect within the religious sphere this veneration is comparable to what a conscience is in the field of moral obligations, namely, a sort of leitmotiv by which the individual person is led. This mental attitude is the reason for the unchanging acquiescence of the Yaghan to the demands of the moral law. He submits to it without contradiction, although he cannot explain it in any other way than by repeating the well-known saying: "Watauinéwa sees everything. -- He wants everyone to conduct himself in the way that has always been customary among all Yamana!" For him the rule of conduct lies in this and similar words, and that is why it has not changed through successive generations. It is true that the fear of punishment

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TR 197 regarded as lost. The few that were saved have unusual words and archaic sentence formations, showing their origin in the distant past. Even older persons were no longer able to give me an exact and detailed explanation of each formula, and they excused themselves by saying that such obsolete words and idioms were no longer used in everyday speech. It is therefore not surprising that old John Lawrence, as well as his sons who were versed in the language, was sometimes baffled by these sayings. The colloquial language of the present day is the result of considerable change since the time when the representatives of the individual dialect groups (p. 199 /untranslated/) were more crowded together and intermingled. Thus, although almost always only the basic idea of any given formula can be determined, all of them together furnish a sufficiently complete picture of the Supreme Being whose image our Yamana carry in their hearts and whose characteristics are familiar to them.

/1076/ c. Originality of the Yamana Religion

• 771 177 The above details taken from the religious heritage of the Yamana are not inconsiderable in number. All of them were brought to light only through my travels. These facts contradict the unanimous agreement of earlier travelers and of the missionaries, active for many years, who, so to speak, flatly deny that our Fuegians have any religious conception and religious activity. This sharp contradiction demands a reliable explanation, all the more so since the religious heritage of the Yamana not only proves rich, but also has a determining, guiding influence on the whole moral attitude of these Indians. It has been repeatedly pointed out, and must still be treated in detail, that all the moral obligations and the traditional customs are, after all, bound up with the Supreme Being.

By way of negative proof it can be convincingly shown that neither the navigators who lay at anchor for only hours or days in the Cape Horn region nor those Europeans who took individual Yamana to Europe with them offered actual religious instruction (16).

16. One may certainly assume that if Fitz-Roy,

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during the journey to England and back had influenced his charges in a religious way, he, and Darwin as well, would in some way have expressed themselves about the results. Their accounts do not contain a single word on the subject. Matthews (p. 94 /untranslated/) probably also did not do anything along this line.

Those three or four men who occasionally referred to the Christian idea of God or who read aloud a chapter from the Bible, Waddell (p. 69 /untranslated/), for example, were personally certain that their references had not the slightest influence. Incidentally, it is not like rough sailors when they land and happen to be with a few natives for a short time to fill those hours with preaching their own Christianity and Christian moral precepts (17). Even if one

17. On page 233 /untranslated/ it was described how many of the navigators in the Cape Horn region behaved toward the natives; they surely did not inspire respect for the white race among those primitive children of nature.

were to assume this improbability, no serious critic could concede that so brief an influence, which would necessarily have taken place without sufficient knowledge of the language on both sides, would provide a lasting effect and an inner transformation on the part of the Fuegians.

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The definite determination to educate these people according to the Christian religion -- which, as has just been said, could not have been true of the sailors on their voyages through southern waters -- was, however, by contrast, the driving force among the missionaries who settled in that archipelago. Despite years of contact with the Yamana, they were the very ones, above all Bridges himself, who not only deny that the Indians had their own religious ideas and practices, /1076/ but who are constantly lamenting the poor success of their efforts which, in any case, reached only a few. None of these missionaries gives definite data about which Christian

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• 771 771 777 truths and ideas the natives adopted, much less about whether they adapted their everyday lives to them. The missionaries did not achieve a genuine, inner transformation of their pupils and charges (p. 208 /untranslated/). In any case, no specific Christian idea is to be found in the religious heritage of the Yamana described above. What one Fuegian or another may have absorbed from the teaching of the missionaries remained, as can be shown, a mere bit of new information, for example, the English word "God." This slight increase of knowledge had no effect whatever; the Fuegian definitely separates it from his ancient heritage and even regards it as, for him, superfluous.

In particular one should note the small number of natives who, with few exceptions, always stayed at the mission stations for only a short time (p. 213 /untranslated/), as well as the vast areas never reached by missionary influence, and, finally, the great fear the people had of coming near the mission stations after the ravages of epidemics. . During the first decades mutual exchanges were greatly handicapped by insufficient knowledge of the language. The mere fact that small groups of natives listened attentively to English does not prove that they understood everything, much less that they would sooner or later have translated it into action from inner conviction (18).

> 18. On the subject of the natives sent to Isla Keppel, J. Lawrence (*Mitt.* VI, 37; 1872) writes, characteristically, on October 17, 1871: "Whenever I give them religious instruction..., they are most attentive, and while I endeavour, though very imperfectly, to explain to them some portion of Holy Scripture, they listen always with deep interest. If I question them as to their knowledge of Scriptural things, they confess they know very little, at the same time express their desire to know much more" /cited in English/.

They behaved as the missionaries wanted them to, and they also took part in the religious service and in the Bible reading as other

L: Gaensle--1010 8-6 (1919-1934) 1937 0102 Tarlgon 1/45

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as they were urged to do so (18). Did this make them faithful

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18. The prayer meetings of the Indians are always described by the missionaries as good or successful. But what is to indicate that these "savages" took part from inner conviction? In his account Lewis (Mbl.VI, 30.1972), for example, mentions that the Yaruma "George Shepard informed me he himself had been to some of the other people's wigwams talking to them of all he knew concerning the future world, and remarked that some listened attentively to what he said, while others would not listen" /cited in English/.

Christian? Spegazzini (p).186, for example, emphatically denies it: "The catechized Indian generally does not believe, and when I asked some servants of the English missionaries if they believed, they replied: 'And you have seen the spirits of the woods /montes/ and of the water?'... Those who believe do so solely in order to make one of the missionaries /1977/... The children of the missionaries [of the mission] leave and find themselves without tools, without social backing, without anything, they have to live, and they go back to living as their parents did" /translated from Spanish/. In this environment they quickly lose everything that teaching offered them. From the start Spegazzini (ibid.) regards any attempt to influence older children as useless. "An Indian older than ten is not responsive to civilization; he already has his principles of freedom and lessons too deeply rooted in his soul" /translated from Spanish/. The number of baptisms and marriages solemnized at the mission centers is remarkably small (p.188 /interpolated/). Bridges,however, translated individual sections of the New Testament and recently Wilkens published a few prayers in Yaruma (38), but I do not know of a single Fuegian

38. Compare 73 and 130 collected the bibliographic details. Compare also my data on page 148 /interpolated/ and some supplementary material in Gaensle (1976).

L. Cranbrook—0011 0-6 (1910-1920) 1927 0000 Tongan 0000

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who could have read these writings with understanding and profit. It has likewise not been shown that those who received special instruction committed their knowledge to their companions (31).

> 31. Deeprose (Op.Cit) praises Batten's good memory and says that the latter said on his Keppel "whatever he had learnt of religion and morality -- not much of them last, to be sure.... When questioned as to the efforts he had made to impart his acquired notions of religion to his countrymen, he replied, 'Yes. me tell God very good, make everything. Jesus Christ God's Son, very good -- die. My people stupid -- no valley [no value]. Tyer tell more'" /Acted in English/.

If one carefully surveys the entire religious heritage of the Tongans, its individuality is clearly apparent and nowhere can an amalgamation with Christian ideas be demonstrated. The belief in Tangaloa is not the result of missionary influence.

Without any doubt is proven to be the special heritage of the Tongans, which they held and cherished long before their first contact with Europeans. My own research, and particularly the wholly unusual, accidental way in which I personally stumbled upon their religious heritage (p. 000), in itself explains why it was withheld from other visitors and even from the missionaries. It is not necessary to repeat the details, they have been fully presented.

2. Its Intrinsic Value

Many unexplained circumstances definitely and clearly verify that the Tongans have preserved their heritage of religious ideas and practices and have transmitted it from ancient times to the present. Quite generally, these ideas and practices are to them a logical pandemic of their thinking. This is not to credit them with a particular gift for philosophical speculation, but their

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minds also demand a satisfactory answer to certain questions that arise. A person like Maŝemikens, for example, tried to fathom how people actually came into existence and how /1078/ animals began to appear after the universal flood (p. 972). Although certain situations continue to lack full and specific explanations, everyone rests content in the knowledge that although he lacks insight into the handiwork of Watauinĕ́iwa, the latter, the true and actual Abā́ila, accomplishes everything that the human being is unable to grasp in detail. The pressure that traditional custom exerts on every Yamana without exception is, in the final analysis, regarded as an emanation of the will, as a command of Watauinĕ́iwa. Everyone adapts to it as a matter of course, as though it could not be otherwise. It was always like this, ever since the Yamana existed, simply because "that-one-up-there" always existed and he himself does not change, any more than do his regulations. In the play of blind natural forces our Fuegians recognize the movement of their Supreme Being who guides them and holds them in his hands. Do they have any other choice, then, but to turn to benevolent Hidā́buan with the request that he command those uncanny forces to desist when they might harm and endanger their own lives? New human lives arise from his sphere of power. The loss of a close relative through death, however, leaves a more enduring impression and is more keenly felt as an injury. This intervention is solely the work of the supramundane skill of brutal, heartless Wĕ́lapatux. Toward human beings he can permit himself evident high-handedness with the worst consequences, for he is safe far behind the clouds and inaccessible to all the lamenting and raging of helpless earthly pilgrims. From the closely linked chain of ideas concerning the personality and activity of the Supreme Being, only the most important have been mentioned here. On account of their simplicity they can be easily arranged into a well-ordered system.

Although no Yamana has undertaken a similar experiment for himself, the totality of his religious heritage is adequate for him because he is aware of its more important details in his everyday life on any given occasion. Actually, he accepts the various happenings, whether they be more agreeable or very bad, solely because he relates them to his Watauinĕ́iwa. If the latter is the

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• 771 776 driving power and active cause behind any occurrence whatever, especially behind events of decisive import, then discussions, no matter how long, would change nothing, and the person affected has no recourse but to realize his own helplessness and to yield weakly to the situation imposed upon him. As may be expected, this decision restores his mental balance and calms even the greatest surges of fury against the severest losses and the bitterest disappointments. One must see these Fuegians on the occasion of a general funeral rite, yamalaśemóina. Everyone in the company of others acts as though he were mad with grief, and a few hours later, at any rate by evening of the same day, ruefully and full of confidence, he again turns to /1079/ his Hidábuan with sincere requests for forgiveness and pardon for his excited, irreverent behavior which, he says, was, after all, not entirely unjustified.

771 791 177 The complete contentment which their religious heritage gives the Yamana has prevented any desire for more. That is why they regarded the Christian teachings presented to them by the English missionaries as utterly superfluous. It can scarcely be proved that a single one of them was drawn to these missionaries from a pure desire for Christian truths. In fact, the missionaries had great trouble getting a few children to stay in their stations for any length of time and occasionally gathering together a few adults for a religious service and instruction. The following statements illuminate the whole situation like a strong light. Mary told me that as a girl she was taken into the house of the Lawrence family in Ushuaia for a few months to do all kinds of work. She once described to me her usual occupations and also pointed out that every day ended with a short reading from the Bible, to which the missionary added a few explanations about his God. I asked her to tell me whether she welcomed this, whereupon she replied with surprising candor: "Oh well, I listened to everything. Mister Lawrence kept speaking about his God. He said: 'Our Lord' /cited in English throughout this passage/ demands that everyone be a good human being, that everyone work hard, that no one steal from another, and that no man have anything to do with another's wife, that we should all get along with each other. And he repeated all kinds of other things. But what he told us about his 'Our Lord,' all this Watauineiwa revealed to the Yamana long

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before, all this was always known to our own ancestors. So we don't need his 'Our Lord'! Our Watauinéiwa is enough for us, and what he has told us suffices. I always realized that, each time Lawrence spoke of his 'Our Lord.'" As was proved by my questions, Mary actually adopted nothing from Christianity. The attitude of Nelly Lawrence is even more convincing. As the daughter-in-law of this missionary, she lived in the same house with him for several years and was in daily contact with this deeply religious man. After I became acquainted with Watauinéiwa through her efforts, she no longer hesitated to refer to him. She plainly showed me how pleased she was that I, too, sincerely enjoyed her religious views. Not for that reason alone, however, but out of innermost conviction she confessed to me that the traditional Watauinéiwa faith was perfectly adequate for her and that she felt no desire for the thing John Lawrence so often mentioned about his "Lord" /cited in English/. "Everything that the Yamana tell about our Watauinéiwa is incomparably more beautiful!" She repeated this conviction to me several times with proud self-confidence. In the general register of baptisms there is no mention that she was baptized /1080/ (p. 331 /untranslated/), and I never discovered any traces of Christian faith in her, but in her ideas about Hidábuan she felt happy and content; hers was really a deeply religious nature.

For the Yamana their Supreme Being is certainly no supernatural figure passively hidden beyond the stars, but rather someone they feel close to. They connect many of the minor details of everyday life with him, and by no means only the startling events. On August 9, 1923, I was in Punta Remolino, sitting at supper with the Lawrence family. Fred had a hired man in his service who came from Chiloé and who was old and quite stupid. Once again he had proved extremely awkward in his work, and Fred's description of it was so vivid that we all had to laugh heartily. Only Nelly remained serious and warned her husband with the following words: "Don't talk disparagingly about that old man. Watauinéiwa doesn't like it at all and will punish you for it. One must not make fun of old people!" Her reprimand to the whole group was so natural and serious that we were dumbfounded and, without demur, stopped laughing.

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116 781 A few days later the Chilean captain of the little cutter "Garibaldi" which belonged to this farm indulged in loud outbursts of rage because of the unfavorable weather situation. Nelly happened to be in my room and I paid no attention to the man outside the house. Before she left she said with grave emphasis: "In the early days we knew nothing of the habit which Europeans introduced of always being discontented with the weather. The Europeans complain: now there is too much wind and now too much rain, now too much snow and now too little sun! We must take the weather as it comes. If a person flies into a rage, it just makes it worse, for Watauinéjwa will become angry and then it will be really bad!" This sounded like warning for me as well.

An old Yamana spent the forenoon looking out in vain for bright sunshine, but he did not lose patience. In reply to my teasing which was meant to irritate him slightly, he said: "It is Hidábuan who sends the weather, the heavy snow and wind and frost. We can't do anything about it, we must take it as it comes! There is no use scolding loudly about bad weather. That doesn't help a bit; it can only make matters worse simply because Hidábuan will grow even more angry. It is better not to say anything and not to think anything bad about Hidábuan who in each case can send us still worse things."

•111 The religious heritage of the Yamana is adequate for the conditions of life allotted to them and for the slight demands which they make upon it. It is in complete harmony with them. They make use of the individual ideas in their world of religious belief quite as a matter of course in their everyday life and at their ceremonious youth initiation, at a general funeral rite, and for hushed individual sorrow, and they apply these conceptions /1081/ naturally and unaffectedly, as is possible only with an indigenous body of ideas. They appreciate their value consciously and unconsciously, and lacking nothing, they feel no necessity to ask for more or to take what the missionaries have offered them. I never heard a word of regret or discontent over the fact that all missionary activity has been suspended.

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797 Nelly, frankly said: "I have long known that the Yamana worship Watauinéiwa, that, according to them, he causes death, and that they have many other ideas, but I never asked the people more specifically about these things!" When we asked why he had not disclosed all this to us on his own initiative, he replied simply and truthfully: "How was I to know that people in Europe are interested in finding out about the religious ideas of the Fuegians!" He, too, was unable to comprehend that his own father and, above all, Bridges were completely ignorant about what he had repeatedly experienced for a long time. Nevertheless this strange situation can be easily explained. The natives unanimously said: "The missionaries never asked us about these things. How could we, without having been asked, tell them about Watauinéiwa?" The following thought was even more decisive: "Too often Bridges and many another [missionary] reproached us, saying that what we had [in the way of customs and institutions] is bad and worthless and that we would have to abandon it! Such words, accompanied by scornful laughter, hurt us. Besides, whenever they told us about their 'Our Lord' /cited in English/, we realized that for the Whites he was the same as Watauinéiwa is for us Yamana." This explanation agrees with the repeated references to the conscious reserve of the Yamana in front of the missionaries.

● 111 The Yamana, far from regretting the undisguised frankness with which they exposed their most precious spiritual possessions to us, are proud that we too venerate their Watauinéiwa. For decades they were obliged to accept disdainful treatment because of the lack of knowledge of Europeans and to be discredited by the missionaries because they clung to their Watauinéiwa. Now at last we show a genuine and frank appreciation for their "Old-one-up-there" whom they call "father." This gives them great satisfaction. Now at last they see fulfilled a wish they have long cherished, namely, appreciation for their Watauinéiwa. Their eyes shine when we tell them frankly: "Your Watauinéiwa is for you what our God is for us Christians!" They regard this comparison as a sign of the sincere esteem of the Whites for the spirit-being whom they regard as most sacred and who stands majestically above everything visible.

The facts which must be summarized and evaluated as the religious possessions of our Fuegians are rich and many-sided.

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Inasmuch as we have a considerable number of well documented details, the result of painstaking research and of a method which is beyond criticism and can always /1086/ be examined, it will not be difficult for anyone to recognize the facts and abandon the long-held and widespread, but erroneous opinion that the Yamana are absolutely irreligious.

d. General Moral Precepts

The social life of our Fuegians and the behavior of individuals, regardless of age and sex, are regulated by definite, unchanging principles that obligate all tribal members without exception. They alone assure the tranquil continuance of the tribal society and guarantee peaceful coexistence for all its parts. These principles constitute the morals or the general moral precepts, and they, of course, reach beyond actual sexual morals and mere rules for external social intercourse.

This presupposes that our natives actually do have a moral consciousness. Obviously they do not lack the capacity for moral judgments and actions; they bring it into the world as a normal endowment of Mother Nature. With it goes an urge to exercise their spiritual power in the direction of what is good and just and to avoid what is unjust and impermissible. Conscience, which our Fuegians by no means lack, guides their unerring judgment in these matters. It teaches everyone the objective and subjective value of moral goodness and dictates the behavior of the will. To be sure these words describe a general human tendency, but one must state them specifically for the Yamana also (cf. Gusinde [e]: 159), for there is no lack of assertions to the contrary. Disregarding older statements, I shall here give space only to the amazing words of someone like Spegazzini (a):176, who spent insufficient time in Tierra del Fuego: "The Fuegians do not know this social convention that we call morals. They perform the natural functions of life, of any kind, in public, and what we call virtue exists only in rudimentary form among the women and, before marriage, consists of a reserve in granting their favors and of fidelity on the part of married women" /translated from Spanish/.

2: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH6 Yahgan SH6

526 The loser would call upon a friend who would in turn challenge the victor who had no choice but to accept. Before the wrestling match began the wrestlers were magically massaged by the medicine man. Sometimes these single matches developed into a free-for-all wrestling match in which several or all of the men would join. Sometimes, too, these general wrestling bouts ended in a serious scuffle.

538 **Music.**—Proverbs were absent. So, too, was poetry; the nearest approach to it was the meaningless words or syllables having a certain rhythm which occur in songs. The songs themselves were extremely 533 simple and monotonous with or without meaningless words. The *Yahgan* had many songs, sung for special occasions such as the čiéxaus and mourning rites; others intoned ad libitum. There were no lullabies. *Yahgan* songs show sundry very primitive features, according to [534] von Hornbostel (1936). There were no musical instruments at all. Even the rattle, drum, and flute were absent. Staves with which to beat time were used in certain rites.

535 **Dances.**—Apart from the dances carried out during the chiéxaus and kina rites, there were none of a symbolic, imitative, or dramatic type, and no war or hunting dances. The *Yahgan* danced alone, in circles or in Indian file. The women rarely danced, and the men and women never together.

RELIGION

● 971 Most of the religious life of the *Yahgan* centered around theism and shamanism. There was a distinct fear of the dead; there were also the mourning observances previously noted; the souls of dead shamans entered into the beliefs and practices of the medicine men. [969] But no organized ancestral cult existed, and the dead were not prayed to. Animistic beings and observances appeared marginal to the theistic cult and focal in shamanism. There were a number of miscellaneous magico-religious conceptions and observations. Each [987] *Yahgan* had a yefáčel, as a sort of guardian spirit. Various omens were believed in: for instance, the call of the owl was supposed to portend a murder or at least a death. A number, too, of taboos were observed: for instance, when traveling by canoe people had to throw waste into the fire kept burning in the canoe, and not into the water, lest the children should cry. There does not appear to have been any form of divination. The kina rite, to be described, had religious features to it, but its purpose and function were primarily social. The great bulk, therefore, of *Yahgan* religion having been taken up with theism and shamanism, in summarizing *Yahgan* theistic and shamanistic phenomena, we shall be summarizing *Yahgan* religion as such.

976 **Theism.**—There was a very definite belief in a Supreme Being called Watauinéwa or Watauinéiwa, who was also called by other

2: Cooper E-4 (no date) 1946 SH6 Yahgan SH6

names meaning "The Powerful One," "The Highest One," and especially by the name of "My Father." He was not the maker or creator, but rather the master and ruler. He was the owner and giver of animals and plant food. It was he who gave life to human beings, and who took it away. He was fundamentally good and benevolent. He lived above in the heavens. He had no body nor had he wife or children. He was distinctly and eminently set off against and above all other spirits, good and bad, and in this sense stood as it were alone. He did not enter into the tribal folklore and mythology. He saw what human beings did, and upon those who broke the precepts of the *Yahgan* socio-moral code, which represented his will, he inflicted punishment in the way of early death, and often the death of their children.

The central role of Watauinéwa in the initiation rites has previously been mentioned. Apart, however, from these rites, Watauinéwa was prayed to a great deal by the individual *Yahgan*. These prayers were mostly petitions to him for food (as the owner of the food animals and plants), for cure and health, and for protection from the elements, as well as expressions of thankfulness. A good many of them were more or less traditionally crystallized formulae, of a few words each, but prayer was likewise expressed in free wording. A quite distinctive feature of *Yahgan* communication with the Supreme Being was the frequency of complaint expressions and charges directed toward him on the occasion of sickness, bad weather, or other evil fortune, and particularly on the occasion of deaths. Gusinde and Koppers collected over 60 of these various kinds of prayer formulae. Some of them are in somewhat archaic language.

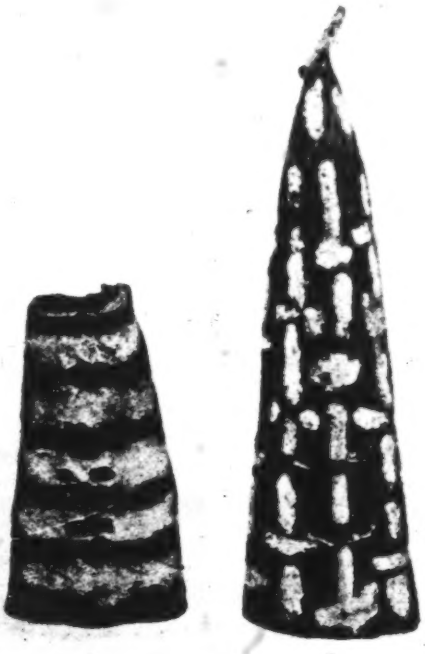
In view of these archaisms in the complex, of the many distinctly native features (e. g., master, owner, not creator or maker), of the absence of all characteristically European or Christian conceptions, and of the express and emphatic statements by the natives whose memories or whose knowledge from their elders reached back to premissionary days, there can be no reasonable question but that *Yahgan* theism is aboriginal, and not the result of missionary influence. It seems equally clear that it was central in the religious outlook of the *Yahgan* and that it entered deeply and dynamically in their thoughts, emotional life, and personal behavior.

Shamanism.—A person became a medicine man (yékamush) through an inner call manifested to him in dreams and visions. The héshteka-yékamush, dwarfish spirits, appeared to him; a female spirit, a Haučéllakĭpa, also played an important part in shamanism, as the shaman's helper. Through the dreams and visions the future medicine man learned which of the small spirits was to be his yefáčel, or particular guardian spirit. From this spirit he also received a song.

3: Lothrop E-5 (1924-1925) 1928
SH6 Yahgan SH6

In figs. 92 and 93 are illustrated some of the masks used by the Yahgan. The material is either bark (fig. 92) or seal-hide (fig. 93), cut to pattern and sewed together with whalebone and gut respectively. There is usually a small opening at the top for ventilation. As Yahgan paints were not waterproof, a single mask could be adorned to represent many characters by the simple expedient of washing and repainting it.

As to the characters represented by the Yahgan, in fig. 92, *a*, is the rainbow, distinguished by broad red, white, and black bands; *b* has alternate red and white stripes, and it represents a smelt-like fish. In fig. 93, *a*, is a model of the *kalăpasha* ghost mask, while *b* represents the sea-hen. The wearers of these masks painted their bodies and limbs with similar decorative patterns.



a *b*

FIG. 93.—Model Yahgan dance masks. Height of *b*, 10 in. (14/2362)

RELIGION

Although it has been repeatedly stated on excellent authority that the Yahgan had no real religion, I think it definitely established that they had religious beliefs and practices.

The Yahgan world was peopled by innumerable unseen beings: ghosts (*kushpig*) of departed shamans, spirits of the sea, the rocks, and the trees. These people, for the greater part, were malicious by nature, resentful of intrusion on their privacy, and, when seen by man, terrifying in aspect. Solitary travelers might suddenly find themselves facing a fierce spirit across the light of his camp-fire,